

TRIBUTE TO SUE ELLEN PANITCH

HON. JOHN W. OLVER

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 4, 2001

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Sue Ellen Panitch of Holyoke, Massachusetts for her outstanding contributions to her community. Since 1965, Ms. Panitch has been somewhat of a "super-volunteer" in Holyoke, having served on numerous boards and commissions, including the Conservation Commission, the Holyoke Community College Foundation, The Therapeutic Equestrian Center, The Future Begins Here, the Council of Human Understanding and the Holyoke Taxpayers Association.

Sue Ellen began her long career as a volunteer at the gift shop at Providence Hospital, and continues to this day to be one of Holyoke's greatest civic champions. Just last month, through Sue Ellen's efforts, the "911 Fund," created by the Holyoke Firefighters union—Local 1693, became eligible to receive a portion of the proceeds raised at the 2002 The Future Begins Here charity event. The 911 Fund benefits victims of the September 11 terrorist attacks and their families.

Ms. Panitch's dedication to creating a better community has been so remarkable that the Holyoke Rotary Club recently honored her with its prestigious William G. Dwight Award. I can't think of a more deserving recipient of this award, and I hope that Sue Ellen will continue to contribute so selflessly to her city. Holyoke is a much better place due to her life's work. Thank you Sue Ellen Panitch.

INTRODUCTION OF THE CALIFORNIA FIVE MILE REGIONAL LEARNING CENTER TRANSFER ACT

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 4, 2001

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to introduce legislation to transfer 27.1 acres of National Forest Service property from the Stanislaus Forest to the Clovis Unified School District. By so doing, this legislation will permit the school district to continue to operate the Five Mile Regional Learning Center on this National Forest land and, more to the point, it will now allow the school district to fund vitally necessary capital improvements to the Learning Center facilities. Without this legislation, these improvements and non-federal expenditures would not be allowed and the Learning Center could not continue due to dilapidation.

This legislation, therefore, should be considered non-controversial and an exercise in cooperative and effective local, state and federal government relations.

The Five Mile Regional Learning Center is an Outdoor Environmental Education School that benefits youth from all over the state of California. Classes range from forest to raptor studies with an emphasis on natural resource

conservation. In addition to the environmental education program the school district offers course work on character development, team building, and individualized challenge activities such as high ropes. During the summer the site is used by a variety of groups, including Educators, DeMolay, Girl Scouts, basketball camps and school leadership students. In addition, a number of counties in conjunction with local and state agencies bring "At risk kids" to the program's Life's Alternatives Involving Risks (LAIR) Adventure Academy.

The Regional Learning Center serves 138 schools from approximately 60 school districts in California. Approximately 14,000 students participated in this educational program last year. Counties served include: Contra Costa, El Dorado, Fresno, Madera, Marin, Merced, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Stanislaus, Toulumne, and Tulare. It operated three basketball camps that reached nearly 1,000 boys and girls. DeMolay, Fresno North LDS, and Four Square Church account for another 400 people using the facility. A project is in development that would utilize the LAIR area as an Elderhostel site focusing on living during the Gold Rush days.

The Five Mile Regional Learning Center is a Forest Service Administrative site located in the Mi Wok Ranger District, Stanislaus Forest. The site includes bartacks, a mess hall, classrooms, a gymnasium and shop buildings. This site is 27.1 acres.

Approximately 100 additional acres adjacent to the National Forest are used as part of the comprehensive conservation/education program for trails, campsites, ballfields, bird mew sites, bird blinds, and a tree nursery.

The 120 acre Five Mile Regional Learning Center has been operated by the Clovis Unified School District since 1989. Prior to that the Fresno County Office of Education starting in 1969 operated the project.

While the Five Mile Regional Learning Center is located on National Forest Land, the federal government plays no role in the operation or maintenance of the facilities used by the program or in delivery of the educational program. The National Forest Service merely permits the use of these facilities and lands to the Clovis Unified School District, and monitors the program to ensure that permit requirements are adhered to.

The buildings and structures that are located on the 27.1 acres of main property have been in existence since the early 1960's. However, the Forest Service has not funded or appropriated monies to maintain or operate these buildings. According to Forest Service documents the "Regional Learning Center facility has outlived its life by years and if it were not for the efforts of the Clovis Unified School District, the buildings would be in a state of disrepair useable to no one."

In addition, Stanislaus National Forest Supervisor Ben Del Villar has stated to the Clovis Unified School District, in correspondence, "We believe that your acquisition of the learning center would be in the best interest of the public and the Forest Service."

Without transfer of ownership the Clovis Unified School District is prohibited from spending its money on capital improvements to ensure that these facilities do not fall into disrepair to the extent that they would be unusable.

The Clovis Unified School District has on average spent more than \$1 million per year over the last 12 years on operation and maintenance.

In addition to the ongoing commitment of more than \$1 million per year in operation costs, the Clovis Unified School District is willing to invest \$5 million over 5 years in capital improvements and renovations to the existing facilities.

The legislation authorizes a new Special Use permit that would essentially continue the authorization for Clovis to use the adjacent 100 or so acres presently used but on which no structures in need of capital improvement exist.

The federal costs of this transfer are administrative-only and negligible to the value that the school district will be spending to increase the value of the property and run this important educational program for the children of California.

RECOGNITION OF NATALIE AURAND OF MIFFLIN, PENNSYLVANIA

HON. BILL SHUSTER

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 4, 2001

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Ms. Natalie Aurand, a resident of my district from Mifflin County, Pennsylvania. The Future Farmers of America recently awarded Natalie the American Degree, their highest honor, at the organization's 74th National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky. Natalie, the daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Edwin Aurand, is a fourth generation Mifflin County Farmer and a very active member of the Big Valley FFA Chapter. She is the first person from her chapter to receive an American Degree in 17 years.

Prior to receiving her American Degree, Natalie earned her Greenhand, Chapter, and Keystone degrees by completing supervised agriculture experience projects in Beef, Swine, and Sheep finishing, Farm Hand Worker, and Home Garden. She is an extremely industrious and involved individual, having held several offices within her FFA Chapter. She continues to be active in FFA and participates in the organization's various county, state, and national events. She is currently attending Delaware Valley College where she is majoring in Agricultural Education.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure you will join me in congratulating Natalie on her accomplishment and her extraordinary service to the FFA. She is truly an outstanding individual and I wish her well in her future endeavors.

TRIBUTE TO FIRST NATIONAL BANK OF LAS ANIMAS

HON. BOB SCHAFFER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 4, 2001

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the First National Bank of Las